

# DEAD DOG DISPATCH

## TRI-STATE GRATTO



# SCHERR CRYSTAL CAVE

## GRANT CO, WV

VOL. #25

ISS. #4

APR

2010

#41



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All material for inclusion in the **DEAD DOG DISPATCH** must be sent to the EDITOR NO LATER THAN THE **25<sup>TH</sup>** OF EACH MONTH.

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\*\*\* The photo on the cover was taken BY Nikki Fox in Scherr Crystal Cave in Grant Co, WV.

\*\*\*\* Don't forget, the **JONES QUARRY BOOKLET** is **STILL** available at a reasonable price **\$6.00**. If you don't have it in your library, then YOU MUST GET IT. It is PACKED with info about the QUARRY, the CAVE, the INDIAN BONES, and of course the **MAP!** If you are interested in purchasing the BOOKLET, contact **BOB BENNETT** [304-579-4304(H) or 304-725-3481 ext 491(W)](E-MAIL at [gimpycaver@comcast.net](mailto:gimpycaver@comcast.net) or **JUDY FISHER** [304-258-4974(H) or 304-258-1822(W)](E-MAIL at [jcf@access.mountain.net](mailto:jcf@access.mountain.net))

**WE NEED EVERYONE TO KEEP THINKING ABOUT VOLUNTEERING FOR AN OPEN POSITION. WE STILL NEED SOMEONE FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS:**

**PROGRAM CHAIR**  
**MEMBER at LARGE**

**PLEASE GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT. WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!**



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# CAVING EVENTS

## 2010

APR 1 ----- ALL FOOL'S DAY  
**APR 2 ----- GOOD FRIDAY**  
APR 2-3 ---- Grand Caverns Restoration – Contact  
Meredith Hall Weberg  
**APR 4 ----- EASTER**  
APR 14 ---- TSG Grotto Meeting 7pm  
APR 15 ---- TAX DAY  
APR 22 ---- EARTH DAY  
APR 23----- ARBOR DAY  
MAY 5 ----- CINCO de MAYO  
MAY 6 ----- NATIONAL DAY of PRAYER  
**MAY 9 ----- MOTHER'S DAY**  
MAY 12 ---- TSG Grotto Meeting 7pm  
**MAY 15 ---- ARMED FORCES DAY**  
**MAY 21-23 - Spring VAR sponsored by Bubble  
Cave LLC**  
MAY 28-31 – Speleofest - KY  
**MAY 31 ---- MEMORIAL DAY**  
JUN 4-6 ---- BUBBLE CAVE WEEKEND  
JUN 9 ----- TSG Grotto Meeting 7pm  
JUN 14 ----- FLAG DAY  
JUN 17-20 – SERA Cave Carnival, Monteagle, TN  
**JUN 20 ----- FATHER'S DAY**  
JUN 20 ----- WV DAY  
**JUN 21 ----- SUMMER SOLSTICE**  
**JUL 4 ----- INDEPENDENCE DAY**  
JUL 14 ---- TSG Grotto Meeting 7pm  
JUL 17 ---- Annual Grotto Picnic – 12pm  
JUL 25 ---- PARENT'S DAY  
**AUG 2-6 -- NSS Convention, Essex Jcnctn, VT**  
AUG 11 ---- TSG Grotto Meeting 7pm  
**SEP 2-6 ---- OTR**  
SEP 6 ----- LABOR DAY  
SEP 8 ----- TSG Grotto Meeting 7pm  
**SEP 11 ---- PATRIOT'S DAY**  
**SEP 23 ---- AUTUMN EQUINOX**  
OCT 7-10 – Fall TAG Cave-In, Lookout Mt, TN  
OCT 11 ---- COLUMBUS DAY  
OCT 13 ---- TSG Grotto Meeting 7pm  
OCT 16 ----- Bridge Day  
**OCT 31 ----- ALL HALLOW EVE**  
NOV 2 ----- ELECTION DAY  
**NOV 7 ----- DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME ENDS**  
NOV 10 ---- TSG Grotto Meeting 7pm  
NOV 11 ---- VETERAN'S DAY  
NOV 13 ---- SADIE HAWKIN'S DAY  
**NOV 25 ---- THANKSGIVING**  
**NOV 26 ---- BLACK FRIDAY**  
DEC 8 ----- Wrap Presents for Red Cross 6pm  
**DEC 11 ---- ALLUAL TSG CHRISTMAS**

CELEBRATION at Bob & Paulette's  
home 6pm

DEC 12 ---- Christmas caving  
**DEC 21 --- WINTER SOLSTICE**  
**DEC 24 --- CHRISTMAS EVE**  
**DEC 25 --- CHRISTMAS DAY**  
**DEC 31 --- NEW YEAR'S EVE**

## 2011

AUG 2-6 ---- NSS Convention, Glenwood Springs, CO

## 2012

JUN 25-30 -----NSS Convention, Lewisburg, WV

\*\*\*\*\* CAVE BUCKS \*\*\*\*\*

CAVE BUCKS is a voluntary donation for  
cave purchases. The money is collected at  
each monthly meeting and sent to the  
organization of choice. The money SHOULD  
NEVER be kept past the week it is collected.

Month of March ----- \$29.00

TOTAL TO DATE: ---- \$4652.00

Keep It Coming!

## WEBSITE & CAVING LINKS

Tri-State Grotto ----- [www.tristategrotto.net/](http://www.tristategrotto.net/)  
VAR ----- [www.varegion.org/](http://www.varegion.org/)  
NSS ----- [www.caves.org/](http://www.caves.org/)  
NSS Convention 2010 ----- <http://www.ics2009.us/>  
OTR ----- [www.otr.org/](http://www.otr.org/)  
MAR ----- [www.caves.org/region/mar/](http://www.caves.org/region/mar/)  
WVCC ----- [www.wvcc.net/](http://www.wvcc.net/)  
Andy Celmer ----- [www.tristategrotto.net/Andy/](http://www.tristategrotto.net/Andy/)  
Bob's Web Site ----- [www.tristategrotto.net/Bob/](http://www.tristategrotto.net/Bob/)  
Ehren Gieske ----- [www.tristategrotto.net/Ehren/](http://www.tristategrotto.net/Ehren/)  
Jerry's Cave Web Site -----  
----- <http://www.caves.org/member/jerry/>  
Vitas Eidukevicius ---- [www.tristategrotto.net/Vitas/](http://www.tristategrotto.net/Vitas/)  
David Hackley's Web Site -----  
---- <http://s180.photobucket.com/albums/x307/clearsig/>

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Todd Roberts -----  
 ---- [http://s63.photobucket.com/albums/h143/Todd\\_05/](http://s63.photobucket.com/albums/h143/Todd_05/)  
 Bob Gulden ----- [www.caverbob.com/home.htm/](http://www.caverbob.com/home.htm/)  
 Nikki Fox -----  
 ---- <http://s231.photobucket.com/albums/ee8/cavefox1/>  
 Rock Climbing Knots Friction -----  
 - [www.chockstone.org/TechTips/prusik.htm#Bachman/](http://www.chockstone.org/TechTips/prusik.htm#Bachman/)  
 Tri-State Grotto MySpace -----  
 ----- [www.myspace.com/tristategrotto/](http://www.myspace.com/tristategrotto/)  
 Animated Knots by Grog ---- [www.animatedknots.com/](http://www.animatedknots.com/)  
 White Nose Syndrome -----  
<http://www.caves.org/grotto/dcg/wns-notice-to-cavers.pdf>  
 NSS Online Cavers ----- [www.onlinecavers.com/](http://www.onlinecavers.com/)  
 WNS -----  
<http://www.caves.org/WNS/WNS%20Info.htm/>  
 Containment Procedures -----  
<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/whitenosemessage.html/>  
 Crystal Grottoes Caverns -----  
[www.crystalgrottoescaverns.com](http://www.crystalgrottoescaverns.com)



MONTH OF APRIL

Lauren McCoy, Ann Shepherd

*HAPPY BIRTHDAY*



Here are a few links the read up on WNS and keep up on the developing news:

NSS Page

<http://www.caves.org/WNS/index.htm>

WNS Donation Page

[http://www.caves.org/WNS/Rapid\\_Response.shtml](http://www.caves.org/WNS/Rapid_Response.shtml)

US Forest Caves Closure

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[http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/docs/apr\\_2009\\_caves\\_closure/closure\\_order.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/docs/apr_2009_caves_closure/closure_order.pdf)

US Fish & Wildlife Advisory

[http://www.caves.org/WNS/USFWS-WNS\\_cave\\_advisory\\_news\\_rls\\_2009-03-26\\_final-1.pdf](http://www.caves.org/WNS/USFWS-WNS_cave_advisory_news_rls_2009-03-26_final-1.pdf)

WNS Research

<http://www.caves.org/WNS/WNS2009research.pdf>

D-Con Procedures

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/whitenosemessage.html>

The testimony on WNS before the joint sub-committee video

[http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/index.php?option=com\\_jcalpro&Itemid=27&extmode=view&extid=259](http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/index.php?option=com_jcalpro&Itemid=27&extmode=view&extid=259)

Subcommittee on WNS hearing NSS web page

<http://caves.org/WNS/Hearing%20on%20WNS.htm>

Geomyces in cave sediments

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/whitenose/PDF/WHB2009-03WNSFinal.pdf>

Geomyces in France

[http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white\\_nose.html](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html)

WNS in Hell Hole

<http://wvgazette.com/News/201003070443>

Scherr Crystal Cave

Here is a listing of articles and internet venues that Scherr Crystal Cave has been mentioned in:

*Charleston Daily News, Moorefield Examiner, Grant Co Press, Charleston Gazette, Spirit of Jefferson, Herald Dispatch, Huntington, WV, WWVA.com, Bluefield/Beckley, WV, Newstimes.com, Danbury, CT, Dead Dog Dispatch (covers) Feb & Mar, Facebook, NSS Discussion Board, WHVS-TV, Harrisonburg, VA, The Journal, Martinsburg, WV*

There could possibly be more but I stopped looking.



# SCHERR CRYSTAL CAVE IN THE NEWS

I have been holding back the story of Scherr Crystal Cave because the *WV Caver* wanted to use the story as a lead article originally for the June issue. But since has been put back until the August Issue. Therefore I've reluctantly been putting my *Dead Dog Dispatch* article off. The actual article will appear in our June issue with all the bells & frills. To give you a taste of what's been happening and has happened here is a taste of the cave's popularity and notoriety. Different versions of the article about the caves discovery have appeared in many newspapers, the NSS cavechat.org, facebook, and other internet venues. I guess you could say that I have become somewhat famous because of the pictures that I put on the WVDOT computer. Nikki Fox and I took many pictures while the others on the trip were exploring and surveying. I'm not sure exactly how many pictures Nikki took but I took 150 pictures and all but about 10 pictures turned out pretty good. Here are a few of the better newspaper articles. Permission was granted by each of the editors of the newspapers to use the articles! Bob



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Kurt Waldron rappels into the opening of a pristine cave discovered by workers on a highway project in Grant County.

# Crew makes fantastic find

## Highway contractors stumble across 'gorgeous' crystal-filled cave

By BILLY WOLFE  
DAILY MAIL STAFF

Caving enthusiast Bob Bennett recently got a rare opportunity when he helped lead an underground expedition of a previously undiscovered cave in Grant County.

The cave was discovered when contractors working on the Corridor H project accidentally pierced one of the cave walls while making a hillside road cut. Prior to last month, there was no opening and it had existed undisturbed.

Charley Riling, special assistant to the state highway engineer for environmental projects, and environmental monitor for the Corridor H project, said he was immediately concerned about the potential danger posed by the cave.

No one knew the cave's size, or if its tunnels led under the site of the planned roadway, he said.

The state still had Bennett's phone number on hand from a previous cave exploration he had conducted, and he was called in to investigate.

"We had two main concerns," Riling said. "Did the cave go under the roadway, and did it have flowing water in it?"

If the cave ran under the construction site, it could have created instability as the roadbed was lowered into place, he said.

Along with five "hard-core" cavers, Bennett headed to Scherr to lend his expertise.

Among those accompanying Bennett was Nikki Fox, a professional photojournalist, who documented the expedition.

He said they backed his truck up to the small entrance and rigged their gear to the truck bed.

What they saw inside nearly took their breath.

■ Turn to **CAVE/7A**



COURTESY OF NIKKI FOX

Caving enthusiast Bob Bennett helped lead a team of six who explored the previously undisturbed limestone cave.



COURTESY OF BOB BENNETT

Many of the cave walls were covered in beautiful white crystals. Nikki Fox, a photojournalist and caver who took part in the exploration, found it unsurpassed in mineral beauty.



COURTESY OF BOB BENNETT

Bennett said he was amazed by the wealth of mineral formations in the 400-foot-long cave.



# Cave

▲ Continued from 1A

## Officials to seal cave entrance to discourage trespassers

"There was a body-sized slot, about 10 feet up on a wall, and once you went through this little hole, the other side was just fantastic," he said.

The cave was rich in mineral beauty with stalactites and delicate calcite formations hanging from the ceiling. Many of the walls were covered in large white crystals, he said.

"There were crystals everywhere," Bennett said. "It was just awesome. It blew our minds."

Fox, who has explored new caves several times, said the Scherr cave was impressive.

"I map and survey caves so I get into the new stuff quite a lot," she said. "It was very small, but as far as formations go, it really does not get any better than this cave."

"It was just so gorgeous."

The cave had never been seen by human eyes. Bennett said he was particularly excited to know he was among the first to witness the wonders of the crystal cave.

The Martinsburg native also will be one of the only people ever to set foot inside the cave.

State officials plan to have the entrance sealed off as soon as possible.

Rilling said the cave presents a potential hazard and the entrance will be sealed sometime within the next week.

"We have a lot of concerns with it," he said. "That's why, from our standpoint, we are sealing it."

Rilling said the cave crosses onto private property and the owner also wants the entrance closed off. He said the property owner, whom he did not name, wants to keep potential trespassers away.

Bennett said he understands the property owner's position.

"He doesn't want people going in under his land and maybe getting hurt," he said.

In the meantime, the state is asking everyone to stay away from the site. Officials did not disclose the exact location of the cave.

Knowing the cave eventually



COURTESY OF BOB BENNETT

The team discovered large stalactites and other mineral formations growing from the ceiling and walls of the cave, which sat undisturbed until road contractors accidentally discovered it.

would be sealed, Bennett said it was tempting to take a few keepsakes with him. But he and his fellow cavers resisted the urge, he said.

He believes it is important that cave environments be altered as little as possible by explorers.

"You can't go against your beliefs," he said.

Bennett and the others were able to map the entirety of the cave in about six hours. The mapping allayed Rilling's concerns.

The cave is about 400 feet long, and the passage actually curves away from the roadway, Bennett said.

"The point where we entered the cave to the bitter end was about 200 feet. If you add up all the passages in the cave, it amounted to about 400 feet. This included a passage going down to the in-cave pit, the hidden room and several side passages that went in the same direction as the main cave," he said.

The discovery of the cave did not delay progress on the Corridor H project, Rilling said. Construction already had been halted due to nasty winter weather conditions.

Because the cave never had been opened to the outside world, Bennett said there was no wildlife of any kind inside.

Although it was a rare occasion for Bennett, he said caves actually are discovered more often than people might think.

"The list of caves in West Virginia and Virginia continues to grow," he said, adding that the geology of the state's Eastern Panhandle is very favorable to cave creation.

"About 85 percent of caves are in limestone," he said. "And that particular limestone out there is very cavity forming."

Bennett's history with the department is one of happenstance.

In 2003, Bennett got a call from a friend who told him a large sinkhole had opened near



KEVIN CADE/DAILY MAIL

Martinsburg. He said he had to go investigate the opening for himself.

A work crew was trying to fill in the gaping pit when Bennett arrived. He said it was clear the workers didn't realize what they were up against.

"I could see they were all kind of confused," he said. "They had dumped about 20 dump truck loads of dirt down in it and it didn't even touch the pit."

He offered to go underground and map out the cave for the department, he said.

"I was surprised they let me do it," he said. "We surveyed it for them and then they saw what they needed to do."

He also gave his phone number and e-mail address to a state road official. Seven years later, he got the call to come to Scherr.

Now 63, Bennett said he doesn't spend as much time underground as he used to. He has explored and mapped caves for more than three decades. These days he still goes caving at least once or twice a month.

In the 30 years he has spent caving, Bennett has had a few close calls.

While exploring a cave in Virginia a few years ago, Bennett said he fell in a hole and did serious damage to his ankle.

"It wasn't broken, but the doctor said it would have been better if it was," he said, adding that he had to wear an ankle brace off and on for about six years after the incident.

He was about 1,000 feet underground at the time, and his fellow spelunkers had to help him back to the entrance.

Others who accompanied Bennett and Fox on the Scherr Cave exploration were Chris Coates, Bob Denton, Kurt Waldron, Terry McClanaphan and Danny Cumbo.

To view more photos of the cave, visit [www1.com/fnb](http://www1.com/fnb).

Contact writer Billy Wolfe at [billy.wolfe@dailymail.com](mailto:billy.wolfe@dailymail.com) or 304-348-4843.



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Two sections  
16 pages  
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# Grant County Press

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BEDFORD SPRING WV 25411-0276  
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80¢ (75¢ plus 5¢ tax)

## SCHERR BEAUTY

## SCHERR BEAUTY

Construction of the Corridor H 4-lane highway has had an unexpected result in the Scherr area.

Road builders uncovered an otherwise unknown cave near the highway's crossing of state Route 42.

Dubbed the "Scherr Cave," the 408-foot passageway was recently investigated by members of a Martinsburg-based group, the Tri-State Grotto. The group is associated with the National Speleological Society.

Almost as soon as the cavers had completed their exploratory work, photographs of the previously hidden wonders circulated throughout the county.

According to Robert Bennett, one of seven cavers who were summoned by the state Division of Highways to check out the hole in the ground, there is no indication the cave had ever been explored, let alone exposed to the outside world.

"I do not believe that there was any evidence on the surface that the cave was there," Bennett said. "The highway workers were surprised when the cave opened up."

Cavers had to use ropes to enter the exposed pit. Inside, they were met by an assortment of features which draw visitors to tourist caverns.

"The original idea was to close off/fill the entrance as long as the cave did not go under the proposed highway," Bennett said. "The cave



trends away from the highway. Now that some of the geologists have seen the photos there are some who would like to preserve the cave because of the beauty of its formations."

He added: "The final decision is up to the WVDOT."

Joining Bennett to explore the cave were Nikki Fox, Terry McClanathan, Kurt Waldron, Chris Coates, Danny Cumbo and Bob Denton. Denton, a geologist, had to leave before entry was completed.

*Thanks to Robert Bennett and Nikki Fox for the photos.*



**TAKE A LOOK** - Rock formations (above) inside the newly discovered cave near Scherr.



**A HOLE IN THE GROUND** - Cavers had to drop about 30 feet in order to gain access to the cavern.

grantcountypress.com

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## News

# Underground Wonderland Discovered While Excavating Corridor H at Scherr

By Jean A. Flanagan  
Moorefield Examiner

Just like in "Alice in Wonderland," the Lewis Carroll tale and recently released Johnny Depp movie, there is a wonderland underground and it's nearby in Grant County. Bob Bennett and a group of cavers recently surveyed a cave under New Creek Mountain.

Scherr Crystal Cave, as it has been named, was discovered by the West Virginia Department of Highways crews while they were excavating for Corridor H. "The Department of Highways found the cave and called me," Bennett said.

Bennett is vice president and founding member of Tri-State Grotto, a cavers club associated with the National Speleological Society.

Bennett had done some cave exploration for DOH in 2003 and the engineer/geologist remembered Bennett.

loads, that didn't make a dent, a friend who works with Department of Highways called and asked me to come take a look."

Bennett, who lives in Gerrardstown, and five of his fellow cavers, Nikki Fox, Terry McChesnut, Kurt Waldron, Chris Cosites and Danny Cumbot repelled into a hole in the ground near the intersection of Route 42 and Route 93 toward Mt. Storm.

"There is a 30-foot drop into the entrance room," Bennett said. "The cave is about 200-foot long, shaped like a dogleg. The crystals and formations were in the second room."

The second room, Bennett described, was through a body-sized hole inside the entrance room. There are four or five other rooms, but there was no clear passage.

The pictures speak for themselves. Crystals that resemble snowflakes, flowstone, stalags that resemble carrots, draperies that resemble slabs of bacon, all formed by thousands of years of dripping water and limestone deposits.

Bennett said it was discoveries

like this that first attracted him to caving about 30 years ago.

"I went to the Sinks of Gandy and found a big hole in the side of the mountain," he said. "We, my brother-in-law and oldest son, went in with flashlights, shorts, sneakers and no shirts. That shows you how naive we were. I thought it was the nearest thing in the world. I guess you could say I was bitten by the bug."

Bennett, who is partially disabled, and by his own admission, "getting a little old for this," doesn't let either of those conditions stop him. "Because of my disability and age, it limits me a little, but I still love it," he said.

The cave is on DOH property so it is up to them as to what to do with the cave.

"At first they were going to close it off, fill in the entrance," Bennett said. "But lately, they've had a change of heart and they're torn about what to do. Now they're thinking about getting it so that it can be explored sometime in the future."

Calls to DOH were not returned as of press time.



Bob Bennett admires some of the formations in the Scherr Crystal Cave.

Photo by Nikki Fox

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Photo by Nikki Fox

Bob Bennett admires some of the formations in the Scherr Crystal Cave.



Photo by Bob Bennett

Crystal formations littered the cave, hence it's nickname, Scherr Crystal Cave.



Photo by Bob Bennett

Colorful formations greeted explorers when they descended into the cave near Scherr.

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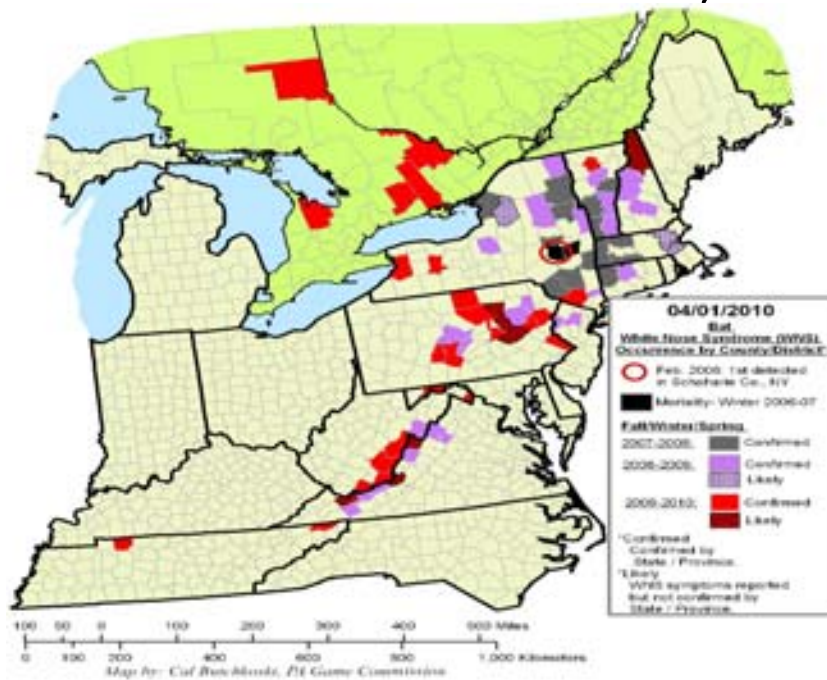
# SAVVY CALENDAR

## APRIL 11TH - MAY 22ND



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Apr 11	Apr 12	Apr 13	Apr 14  meeting 7pm	Apr 15 TAX DAY	Apr 16	Apr 17
Apr 18	Apr 19	Apr 20	Apr 21	Apr 22 	Apr 23 ARBOR DAY	Apr 24
Apr 25	Apr 26	Apr 27	Apr 28	Apr 29	Apr 30	May 1
May 2	May 3	May 4	May 5 CINCO de MAYO	May 6 NATIONAL DAY of PRAYER	May 7	May 8
May 9 	May 10	May 11	May 12  meeting 7pm	May 13	May 14	May 15  ARMED FORCES DAY
May 16	May 17	May 18	May 19	May 20	May 21  Spring VAR sponsored by Bubble Cave LLC	May 22 Spring VAR at WV State Fairgrounds

# DEAD DOG DISPATCH



Updated WNS Map 4/1/10

## 1- SCHERR CRYSTAL CAVE ARTICLES!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

### DEAD DOG DISPATCH

TRI-STATE GROTO OF THE NSS  
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**TO:**

